

# NEWS ANALYSIS

All articles written by David Simpson unless otherwise attributed. Ideas and items for News Analysis should be sent to David Simpson at the address given on the inside front cover.

## Chile: tobacco and injustice

Towards the end of last year, a retired army officer was detained by police in the United Kingdom pending a court extradition hearing. It emerged that this man had been visiting London fairly regularly, and that during these visits he had been in the habit of visiting an elderly lady friend for tea. During his most recent visit, he had also received medical treatment at the private hospital where he was arrested. He was released to await the outcome of the legal process, but forbidden to leave the country.

The man, former Chilean military dictator General Augusto Pinochet, was wanted for questioning by Spain, for alleged atrocities against Spanish citizens following his armed overthrow of the government of the late Salvador Allende in 1973. The woman, Lady Thatcher, former British prime minister, was among the first to call for the general's release, not least, she said, because he was too "old, frail and sick" to withstand trial.

Speculation in the British press about what the two ex-rulers discussed over their cups of tea centred around arms deals, a topic which interests them both. However, when the general was forced to move into an exclusive and highly expensive residence while awaiting the outcome of the legal process, another connection was revealed: tobacco.

Within months of being scrapped as prime minister by her own political party, Margaret Thatcher took on a consultancy with Philip Morris. Apparently this was to help the company open doors to new markets, especially in Asia and other areas ripe for "development", a commercial appointment the termination of which

was only recently announced. And when the private hospital in north London to which the detained Pinochet had been moved asked him to leave, on the grounds that his presence was a nuisance and that there was nothing wrong with him, the person who emerged as his chief benefactor was none other than Carlos Carceres, president of the Chilean subsidiary of BAT.

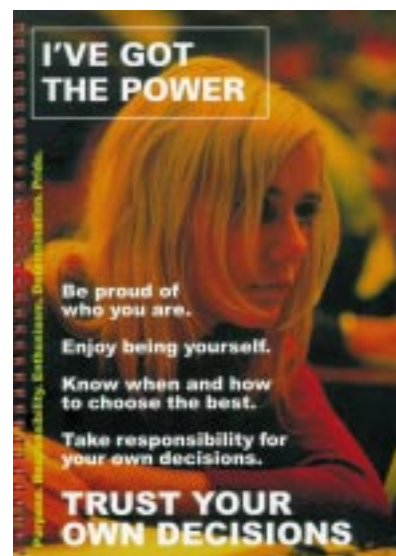
Carceres is on the board of directors of the Pinochet Foundation, an organisation set up in the name of the former dictator to disburse scholarships to the children of military personnel. The foundation took the lead in the fight to defend Pinochet from the Spanish and British courts. BAT's head office tried to distance itself from Pinochet: presumably, whatever the private opinions of individual directors, being seen in the company of a tyrant who presided over institutionalised torture and killings may be a little too much even for a tobacco company. An oleaginous BAT "consumer affairs" spokesman said: "The funding being given to General Pinochet's case is being given by the Chilean subsidiary of BAT. . . . The donations are being administered in a purely personal capacity that have little to do with the company." How can this possibly be true? If the money was not spent on Pinochet, it would surely be remitted to head office, in proportion to its stake in the Chilean subsidiary, and would then be available for distribution as a dividend?

Years of practice on issues such as marginally less lethal cigarettes ("product modification") must induce a capacity for such absurd self-contradiction among head office spokesmen. Perhaps their only regret would be the number of the company's customers who disappeared while in the general's care. In a bizarre way, it is almost reassuring to find that a tobacco company's corporate denial of the addictiveness and dangers of its products is matched by similar gobbledegook on other serious issues.

## The pied pipers of puffing

Imagine if Saddam Hussein sought to sponsor an educational programme for schools on peace studies. Or if the pornography industry tried to sponsor an art appreciation course for schools. Or the Ku Klux Klan a racial harmony programme. Most would think something was a tad fishy. So what are we to make of a tobacco company working behind the scenes to sponsor a health education programme for schools?

When Australian, New Zealand, and Fijian schoolchildren returned to school early this year after their summer holidays, some had the dubious privilege of experiencing a new health education programme entitled *I've got the power*—"a programme designed to develop decision-making skills" (figure). The package is being promoted to state education and health ministers, and to private schools by none other than Philip Morris, the world's largest tobacco company. Some 1500 schools have apparently requested the kit. This is not the first foray into smoking prevention by the local branch of the tobacco giant. In 1996 its "Project



Spot the Philip Morris logo . . . we can't.



*United States Representative Clarence Brown (Republican, Ohio) standing up for tobacco control with a no-smoking role model in front of the Capitol in 1971 at the start of a campaign against smoking by the District of Columbia Medical Society. Mr Brown was clearly pleased to be cementing closer relations with Judy Baker, a prominent figure in tobacco control that year as holder of the title "Miss No Smoking Pin-up". Times have changed and it is doubtful that any politician today, especially in the United States, would be caught in a similar position, for fear of earning himself a disreputable moniker and going down in the next elections. (Photo credit: UPI Telephoto.)*

Condor" budgeted \$420 000 for warning children not to smoke.

Double-dipped in oceans of "edu-babble", the 33-page teachers' guide purports to assist teenagers to "know when and how to choose the best" and to "trust your own decisions". However, Philip Morris has been a bit shy in letting teachers know its interest in the matter. Nowhere in the entire booklet is the company's name mentioned. The words "tobacco" or "smoking" appear only twice throughout. Although claiming that the kit will help "students learn about aspects of health that are community priorities, for example . . . tobacco", there is not one piece of information about smoking and health.

So what is Philip Morris' interest in children's smoking? In public, its

position is clear. It has repeatedly said it doesn't want children to smoke. James Morgan, chief executive officer of Philip Morris USA put it plainly: "There is a perception that Philip Morris is interested in marketing to youth. But never in the 30 years I have been marketing cigarettes have I been in a meeting where we discussed marketing to youth. That's a fact and I would swear to it under oath."

But what has the company been saying privately about teenage smoking? The millions of pages of internal company documents that were posted on the internet last year when the state of Minnesota successfully sued the tobacco companies, contain many Australian documents that tell a rather different story. For example:

- In 1984, reviewing the local slide of Marlboro brand share, Philip Mor-

ris wrote to the Leo Burnett advertising agency: "To PM management the fundamentals of the task are as follows: Marlboro Country as a campaign does not appeal to non-smokers with a future disposition to smoke when they are forming brand preferences." Given that if a person is not smoking by age 18 they are unlikely ever to start, it is plain what sort of non-smokers they had in mind.

- Inter-office correspondence between Philip Morris' American and Australian offices stated: "The key problems seem to be [Marlboro's] lack of appeal to younger smokers and this is the area which needs to be addressed. One possibility might be to concentrate on sampling and promotion as many *young* smokers have never had any first hand experience with the product." (emphasis in original)
- In 1990, another Marlboro plan stated: "Overall objective: Position Marlboro as a "cult" brand—to attract new smokers . . . 23% of the population is 15 years of age and under. 17% is 16–24 years of age. Given predisposition to try/adopt new brands, this segment represents significant market opportunity."

American Philip Morris documents continue the same theme:

- Today's teenager is tomorrow's potential regular customer. . . . The smoking patterns of teenagers are particularly important to Philip Morris . . . the share index is highest in the youngest group for all Marlboro and Virginia Slims packings."

Last year, around 336 000 Australian schoolchildren smoked more than 373 million cigarettes costing around \$A98 million. Philip Morris' has about 50% of the teenage market. If each of this cohort of children smoked for another 25 years, after graduating to average adult consumption (20 cigarettes a day), they will smoke their way through more than 61.3 billion cigarettes, spending at today's prices \$A15.9 billion, of which 18.5% will go to the tobacco industry. And with each year that goes by, another 70 000 children start smoking for the first time.

The Australian Philip Morris campaign mirrors a \$US100 million anti-smoking campaign now being directed at teenagers in the United States. Michael Szymanczyk, the president and chief executive of Philip Morris said recently: "We don't want kids to smoke. . . . I really don't care if we get any publicity about it at all. . . . From my point of view, you do these



things because they are the right things to do, not as PR campaigns.”

By investing in so-called educational campaigns, Philip Morris will be able to legitimise its interest in researching teenagers about smoking. Its vice president in the United States, Ellen Merlo, was reported recently in the American advertising industry newspaper *Ad Week* saying: “We are doing a lot of research and study on youth smoking prevention to identify the right message and the right programs”. Judging by the tepid and woolly product being touted around Australian and Pacific Island schools, what’s “right” to Philip Morris is anything that avoids exposing children to the very information about tobacco that previous generations of children have learned about in government-produced curricula.

Governments and private schools which endorse tobacco company health education programmes are allowing the industry to posture as concerned corporate citizens, while the Minnesota documents and commonsense show the industry to be nothing less than corporate pied pipers.

SIMON CHAPMAN  
Editor

*Examples of the Philip Morris documents can be found at <[www.health.usyd.edu.au/tobacco/Ozdocs.htm](http://www.health.usyd.edu.au/tobacco/Ozdocs.htm)>*

## USA: Smoking Kills baseball team—a teenager explains

In Kentucky, a southern, tobacco-growing state in the United States, teacher Mike Sawyer runs two baseball teams with a difference: their name itself is the blunt, hard-hitting slogan which motivates them: SMOKING KILLS (figure). The teams, for children of 11 years and under, and 12 and under, respectively, are becoming known increasingly far afield, and their name is clearly generating healthy controversy and challenging many Americans’ views on tobacco. Better than any of the news items and messages of support for the teams’ work, the account of one young player sums up what the teams are all about.

“Last summer I got to play baseball for an unusual team. The name of this team was SMOKING KILLS. At first I didn’t know if I would be able to play for that team and for the Jessamine League team too but I really wanted to try so my parents let me. It was a really neat experience because there were guys on the team that I had never

played ball with before because it wasn’t just made up of Jessamine County boys: there were guys from Winchester, Lexington, Paris and Berea. It was coached by men who have coached for a long time and one of them coaches high school ball so I figured I could really learn a lot about ball. The team turned out to be more than just playing ball; it became a social statement.

“One day we look at the Lexington newspaper and on the front page there is a story about our team including a picture. You can’t really see me in the picture but my mom recognized my ear and knew I was really in the picture. I guess Mom’s notice things like that. The story brought up a lot of stuff I really hadn’t thought about before. There were people that were saying it was a dumb name for a ball team and that grown ups who got it together were trying to use the kids to jeopardize a leading cash crop for the state. People were saying that kids shouldn’t be used to make a statement about a grown up fight. I just wanted to play baseball; I wasn’t trying to hurt farmers or anything.

“It got me to thinking about it. My teachers tell me that smoking is a drug and that I shouldn’t do it. My parents say it is something you can get addicted to and then it is real hard to quit. The news is filled with people who had died from cancer because of smoking. I know that I never want to start smoking. My Granny died two years ago with lung cancer. My family moved in with her to help take care of her when she was bad sick. I helped with her because I really loved my Granny. I still miss her and I think that if smoking had not been so easy for her to have started when she was younger I may still have her here. I really miss her.

“My mom smokes. She started smoking when she just 14 years old because nobody ever told her it wasn’t

a good thing to do. They found a spot on her lung about a year ago and even though they found out it wasn’t anything serious, it really scared us. She is trying real hard to quit and her doctor is helping her. I would really miss my mom if she was sick and died—I want her to quit smoking. I think it is hard for kids to grow up without their mom.

“So, I was happy to make a statement for people to not smoke. Plus I got to play baseball. My mom said that all the time she was watching the games she couldn’t smoke while seeing SMOKING KILLS on the backs of all those kids. Maybe other people didn’t smoke while they saw me wearing that jersey. That makes me feel good knowing that maybe I helped someone.

“Of course the highlight of the season is that I hit a home run and the team won. Everyone needs an added bonus. . . . And a trophy is a cool thing.”

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*Mike Sawyer’s personal account of his experiences as a minister preaching a “tobacco kills” sermon in Kentucky was published in Tobacco Control 1998;7: 438–40.—DS*

## Senegal: birth of a new tobacco control group

World no-tobacco day (WNTD) last year saw the debut of a new Senegalese anti-tobacco federation: *Federation des ONG et OCB Luttant Contre le Tabagisme* (FLCT)—“Federation of NGOs (non-government organisations) and CBOs



The “Smoking Kills” team plans tactics for a game. Jake Carter is No 8.

(Community Based Organisations) Fighting Against Tobacco”.

In the face of intensifying and aggressive tobacco marketing, particularly on the part of American corporations, one might think the morale of Senegalese anti-tobacco activists might be low. After all, they have no real financial means to wage war against the millions spent on advertising to convince the Senegalese that a Marlboro is a ticket to the West. In 1996, Philip Morris earned US\$68 billion in revenue, over half from overseas tobacco sales—this adds up to approximately \$5 per person in the world. In contrast the World Health Organisation annual contribution to Senegalese WNTD festivities (which never fully trickles down to NGOs) of \$1000 adds up to a hundredth of a cent per capita annually. It's a corporate version of David and Goliath if there ever was one.

Fighting tobacco in Senegal has always been a roller coaster of ups and downs. In 1981, Senegal's first anti-tobacco corporation Ligue Anti-Tabac, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, pushed for and passed strong anti-tobacco laws which, among other things, banned advertising in the media, prohibited handing out free cigarettes, and called for regulations against smoking in public places. Four years later, due to tobacco industry pressure, most of these laws were thrown out. Those that weren't were never enforced. The only law still standing is one mandating health warnings on tobacco packets. Seeing as most Senegalese buy cigarettes individually and many are illiterate it is easy to

see why the tobacco industry didn't push hard to overturn this particular law.

Nowadays, the only no-smoking signs in hospitals are near the oxygen tanks, teachers smoke freely in high school classrooms, tobacco ads are rampant on the backs of magazines, and every youth knows—courtesy of the red store counters that saturate the country—that “Marlboro is the cigarette sold most around the world”. In 1992 Mouvement Anti-Tabac/Senegal was founded and established a successful educational campaign in hundreds of local schools. Recently the organisation's activities have been crippled due to problems associated with a lack of funding. JAMRA, a Muslim anti-drug/AIDS organisation, a long-term co-sponsor of WNTD activities and holder of strong anti-tobacco views, sent letters to the government annually for 10 years calling for an end to the tobacco industry's “drug trafficking”. Each year it was the same story. Lots of talk and fanfare by officials on 31 May and no follow up until a year later.

Last year 12 organisations with anti-tobacco interests decided to do something about it, forming of a new and promising anti-tobacco federation. The first general assembly was held on 30 May, where 13 individuals, representing eight organisations, were elected officers. The following day the federation kicked off WNTD activities with a march of 150 young people carrying anti-tobacco signs and banners. In honour of last year's theme “Growing up tobacco free” the programme

highlighted personal testimony by young anti-tobacco activities, high school rap groups, and a hilarious “court trial” against “Mr Cigarette” put on by a local school's theatre troupe.

The new federation faces a formidable task, but while there are no unrealistic expectations, members feel a new strength in their unity.

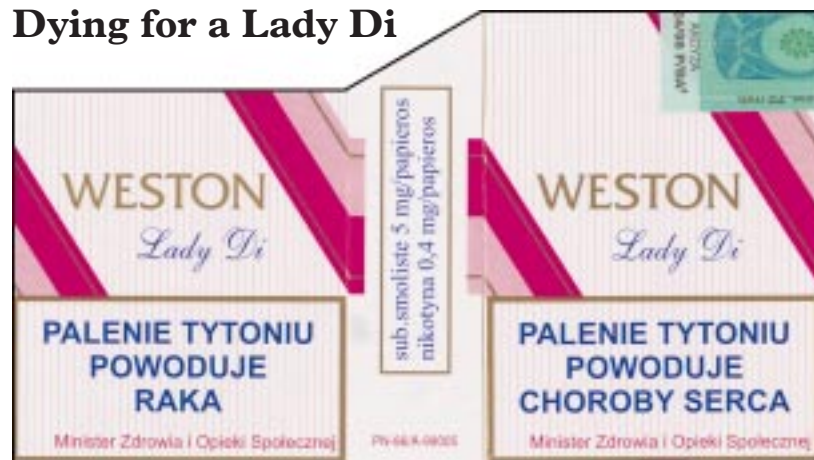
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## Uganda: BAT soccer deal goes down to health

All too often we hear how a beleaguered ministry of health in a developing country has seen the tobacco industry manipulating other, more influential ministries to ensure that overall government policy promotes tobacco, rather than protecting people from it. Heartening news, then, from Uganda, where the Ministry of Information received a highly tempting offer of US\$60 000 from BAT last year, for sponsorship of television broadcasts of the World Cup soccer tournament on state television. Alerted just in time, the Ministry of Health managed to put together an alternative package of finance, mainly from donors, to sponsor messages on HIV prevention, family planning, and immunisation instead. And once in a while, viewers even see an anti-smoking spot on Uganda Television. But before raising our glasses to BAT, without whose efforts none of this might have happened, we have to note the proliferation of tobacco ads on the private sector radio and television channels. However, during the launch of a new BAT brand recently, a local employee apparently warned the public of the dangers of smoking. What can the fellow be thinking of? *Tobacco Control* is still awaiting the precise details, but meanwhile it is clearly high time that BAT reviewed its local staff appointments, and that Uganda received a visit from the public relations people and “scientists” that the company likes to send in to deal with such nonsense (as described in numerous past editions of *Tobacco Control*).

## Dying for a Lady Di



A cigarette brand in questionable taste made by Polski Tyton (Polish Tobacco), one of the few remaining independent Polish tobacco manufacturers. The brand is named after the late Diana, Princess of Wales who was deeply concerned about the effects of tobacco on health, and a strong supporter of anti-tobacco efforts in the United Kingdom.